

1696 Historical Commission Meeting  
Minutes of June 15, 2015

The members of the 1696 Commission met on June 15, 2015, at 11:00 a.m. in Room 203 of the Rhode Island State House.

Commission members present:

Secretary of State Nellie M. Gorbea, Chairperson  
Mary Ann Snider, RI Department of Education, Vice Chairperson  
Keith Stokes, Mayforth Group  
Julia Jordan-Zachery, Providence College  
Valerie Tutson, RI Black Storytellers  
Theresa Moore, T-Time Productions  
Joanna Doherty, RI Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission  
Edward Sanderson, RI Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission  
Joyce Stevos, RI Black Heritage Society  
Rochelle Lee  
Mary Gwann  
Geraldyn Ducady, Haffenreffer Museum, Brown University  
Paul Gaines, Jr., Retired Educator

Commission members absent:

Elyssa Tardiff  
Barrymore Bogues  
Marcia Ranglin-Vassell

Staff present:

Melissa Long, Deputy Secretary of State, Director of Administration  
Ken Carlson, Reference Archivist  
Tom Evans, State Librarian  
Jason Martiesian, Director of Legislative Affairs  
Andy Andrade, Rhode Island Department of Education

Guests:

There were no guests in attendance.

I. Welcome & Introductions

Secretary Gorbea called the meeting to order at 11:20 a.m.

II. Purpose of the Commission

Secretary of State Gorbea opened the meeting by asking the members their goals for the commission. Many of the responses focused on the importance of teaching African American history comprehensively and not simply one month during the year.

In addition, the importance of making the curriculum relevant to both students and teachers so there is an interest in the subject matter. It is critical that the teachers are included in the process so that this curriculum is not seen as a burden but as a benefit to the education of the students.

Also, incorporating technology into the learning and teaching curriculum should be a focal point of the commission's work. Technology can assist in bringing the curriculum to the students in exciting and innovative ways to improve the learning experience. The Department of Education has a new technology platform and teacher resource library.

Rhode Island is fortunate to have an abundance of primary and secondary source information on African American history however we do not make it available as much as we should. Our state has the potential to be a national model in the teaching of African heritage and history.

No votes were taken.

### III. Discuss Work Plan

There was discussion of the legislative deadlines included in the extension resolution passed earlier this legislative session. The commission is charged with reporting back to the legislature by August 1, 2015 with the commission expiring October 15, 2015.

The Commission discussed using the following foundational pieces for the curriculum:

1. Making clear connections to existing RI Standards;
2. Building educator knowledge through pre-service or in-service training; and
3. Integrating social media and technology.

The commission can find some guidance and assistance in developing the curriculum from what other states have developed. It was suggested that the Rhode Island Foundation could be contacted to possibly underwrite the process for curriculum development.

Secretary Gorbea stated that between now and August 1, 2015 the commission would get together to discuss and agree upon the standards to build the curriculum on. The Secretary suggested the possibility of holding a three hour retreat.

A sub-committee was formed to shape the work of the commission. The sub-committee is comprised of the following:

Rochelle Lee  
Mary Gwann  
Geraldyn Ducady  
Valerie Tutson  
Theresa Moore  
Julia Jordan-Zachery  
Mary Ann Snider  
Keith Stokes

There was discussion around documenting what information already is available and how to collect this information.

Keith Stokes put together a timeline of African American history that he will distribute for the potential to be a guide in the commission's work.

No votes were taken.

IV. Public Comment

No public comment.

V. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 12:17 p.m.

Hand-outs:

2014 – H.7490, Substitute A – Creating a Special Legislative Commission to be known as “The 1696 Historical Commission” of Rhode Island and the United States

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText14/HouseText14/H7490A.pdf>

2014 – S.2418, Substitute A - Creating a Special Legislative Commission to be known as “The 1696 Historical Commission” of Rhode Island and the United States

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText14/SenateText14/S2418A.pdf>

2015 – S.0079 – Extending the reporting and expiration dates of the Special Legislative Commission to be known as “The 1696 Historical Commission” of Rhode Island and the United States

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText15/SenateText15/S0079.pdf>

General Assembly Press Release – “Assembly OKs bill to develop curriculum for teaching African-American history in public schools”

<http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/pressrelease/layouts/RI.PressRelease.ListStructure/Forms/DisplayForm.aspx?List=c8baae31-3c10-431c-8dcd-9dbbe21ce3e9&ID=9948>

RI Black Heritage Society and RI Historical Society exhibit flyer “Black Education in Rhode Island”